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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the statements in this pamphlet is to assist school personnel and community leaders in determining focus and direction as they develop programs of physical education for elementary school children. An underlying principle in all of the statements is that physical education is an integral part of the total educational program. To become a fully functioning individual, the child needs many opportunities to participate in well-conceived and well-taught learning experiences in physical education. Brief positions are offered on the following topics: (1) the child; (2) the teacher; (3) teacher preparation and staff development; (4) instructional programs; (5) evaluation; (6) organization and administration; (7) equipment and facilities; and (8) school-related programs. Reflected in the positions are principles in federal legislation on equity for all children regardless of race, creed, sex, or handicapping condition. (FG)

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ESSENTIALS

of a quality elementary school physical education program

A POSITION PAPER

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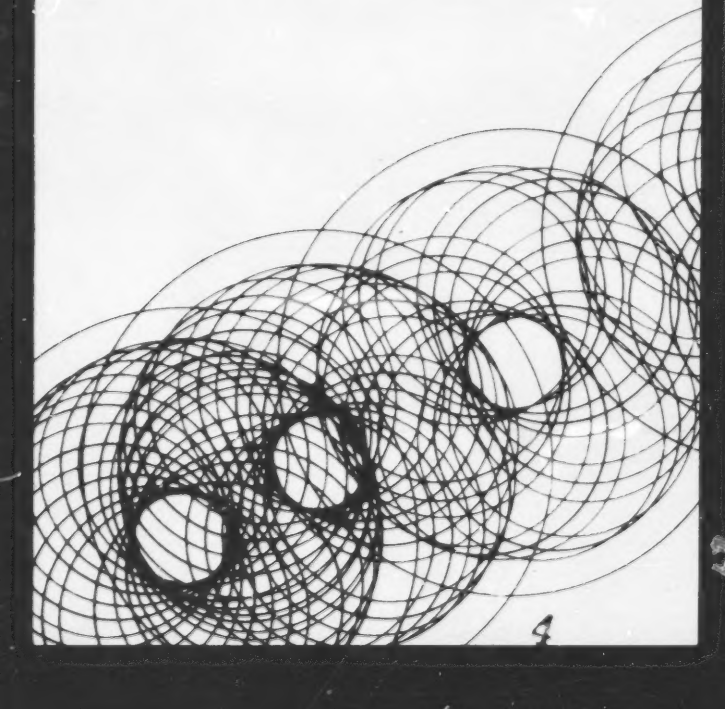
Statement

The purpose of this position statement is to assist school personnel and community leaders in determining focus and direction as they develop programs of physical education for elementary school children. This position paper represents the thinking of a number of people closely working with children and reflects the most current thinking about elementary school physical education. This position paper also reflects current federal legislation regarding equity for all children regardless of race, creed, sex, or handicapping condition.



FOREWORD

Physical education is an integral part of the total educational program. It offers a unique contribution in the development of knowledge, understanding, and positive attitudes concerning human movement. The degree of success the elementary child experiences in work and play is influenced by her/his ability to execute movement patterns effectively and efficiently. For the child, movement is one of the most utilized means of non-verbal communication, expression, and learning. Through movement, impressions about self and environment are formed. In some observable and learned form, movement underlies nearly all of man's accomplishments. To become a fully functioning individual, the child needs many opportunities to participate in well-conceived, well-taught learning experiences in physical education. Achieving this objective requires identification of the essential characteristics of a quality program of physical education for the elementary schools.

In the continuing quest to make physical education experiences more relevant and personal to children, new developments in learning theories, structuring of the subject matter, and new perceptions concerning growth and development of children must be constantly considered, evaluated, and implemented. The teacher plays a vital role in the success of the physical education program and priority should be given to employing a qualified elementary school physical education specialist to maximize student learning and achievement.

We Believe That:

1. Each child is a unique individual with a differing rate of development and different physical, mental, emotional, and social needs;
2. Each child has differing abilities and aptitudes for learning motor skills. The rate and style at which motor skills are mastered also differs among children and within each child from time to time;
3. Every child has the right to experience success in physical education;
4. Each child should have continuous and progressive learning experiences in physical education each year in school. These experiences should begin at the preschool level;
5. Through the teaching of carefully planned and purposeful physical education experiences, the child:
   a. increases understanding of self and environment;
   b. becomes more proficient in motor skills and general body management, thus allowing more active participation in a variety of life experiences;
   c. improves in muscular strength, endurance, flexibility, agility, balance and coordination, cardiovascular/respiratory function, and in knowledge and understanding of how these factors relate to lifelong health and physical fitness;
   d. gains a positive attitude toward physical activity.

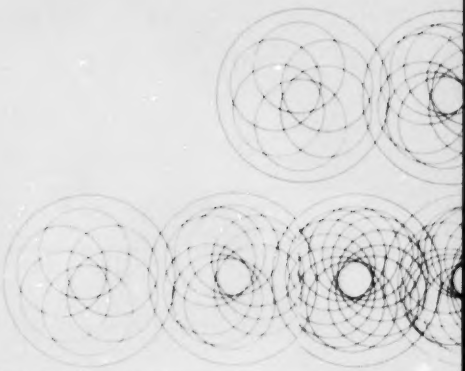
We Believe That:

1. Teachers of elementary school physical education must be able to integrate knowledge and understanding of human movement, child growth and development, and current learning theories in order to provide meaningful physical education experiences;
2. Elementary school physical education teachers must be able to work effectively with children by observing, assessing, and refining children's motor performance in addition to other aspects of their development;
3. Elementary school physical education teachers should be involved, contributing members of the school. The teacher should keep abreast of trends, issues, and new developments by reading, in-service workshops, and participation in local, state, and national professional organizations;
4. Physical education teachers and classroom teachers should work together to develop an in-depth understanding of children in order to provide a program which is commensurate with the needs of each child;
5. When classroom teachers have the full responsibility for the total education program, including physical education, they should be provided with regular access to resource people who are qualified by education and experience to give leadership and guidance pertaining to elementary school physical education in areas such as selection of content, progression and continuity, etc.

TEACHER PREPARATION/ STAFF DEVELOPMENT

We Believe That:

1. Professional preparation for the elementary school physical education teacher should focus on the child in kindergarten through grade six. The curricula should result in the prospective teacher being competent in:
   a. understanding child growth and development, with an emphasis on motor development;
   b. a knowledge of and appreciation for the structure and function of human movement;
   c. observing and assessing children and their movements;
   d. a knowledge of learning processes, teaching strategies, and factors that affect motor learning;
   e. developing curriculum with emphasis on curriculum designs and strategies appropriate for elementary school programs;
   f. assessing and working with children who have special needs;
   g. personal skills and teaching skills in the content areas of fundamental movement patterns, games/sports, dance, gymnastics, and aquatics to meet the needs and interests of children in kindergarten through grade six;
2. In addition, teacher preparation/staff development will provide:
   a. laboratory and field experiences that are directed and supervised throughout the teacher preparation program;
   b. opportunities to become acquainted with a variety of elementary school organizational structures and the administration of physical education



within those settings. The professional preparation curricula should culminate in certification specific for teaching children in the elementary grades;

3. Preparation for the classroom teacher should include an understanding of the relationship of physical growth and motor development to the total development and learning experience of the child. Course work in movement skills, methods, and content of elementary school physical education programs should be required. Laboratory assignments which provide for experiences with young children in physical education are essential;
4. Continuous staff development opportunities should be provided to meet the individual needs of educators concerned with physical education programs for children. Teachers in the field should be involved in the planning of such programs;
5. Personnel concerned with teacher preparation and staff development in physical education should have continuous interaction with children. They need also to be aware of current research and legislation and be able to interpret them for application.

We Believe That:

1. A well-conceived and well-executed program of physical education should be designed to help each child become a more self-directed, self-reliant, and fully functioning individual;
2. A comprehensive physical education program for all children has as its foundation learning experiences which are designed to help each child develop efficient, effective, and expressive movement patterns in a variety of movement situations. Such experiences should serve the divergent needs of all pupils—the gifted, the slow learner, the handicapped, the culturally deprived, and the average. All programs should allow for the developmental needs of each child;
3. The program must be planned and conducted to provide specific outcomes in the areas of:
   a. motor skills (psychomotor);
   b. knowledge and understanding (cognitive);
   c. feelings and appreciations (affective) associated with the ultimate goal of becoming an educated person;
4. Curricular content should be so organized that different levels of learning in skills, understandings, and attitudes are recognized. Learning should be provided for in a sequential and developmental pattern;
5. The instructional program should include learning experiences which will

help each child develop skill in fundamental movement patterns, games/sports, dance, gymnastics, and aquatics. The program should be designed to:

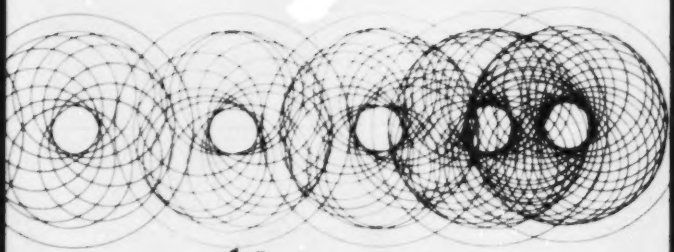
a. develop motor skills and efficient movement patterns;
b. encourage vigorous activity and help each child achieve the highest level of physical and health-related fitness of which he/she is capable;
c. help develop an understanding and appreciation of movement as a participant as well as an observer;
d. emphasize safety practices;
e. foster creativity and encourage expression and communication in movement;
f. promote self-understanding and acceptance;
g. promote social interaction;
h. help each child learn how to handle risk-taking, winning, losing, and all other challenges.

These include teacher-directed as well as self-directed learning. If learning is to be personalized and also concerned with the cognitive and affective domains, decision-making must be shared by the teacher and the learner;

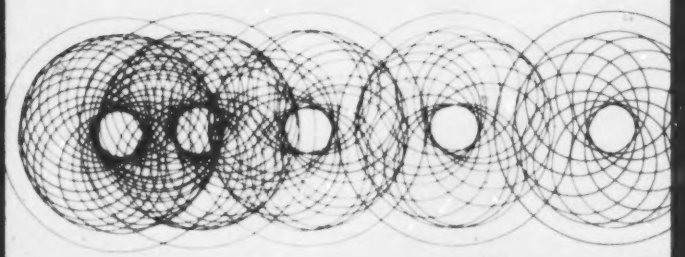
6. Innovative use of audio-visual materials, large and small group instruction, individual help, and interdisciplinary approaches should all be utilized in the instructional setting.

We Believe That:

1. Evaluation must be a continuous and vital part of the physical education program. It is used to determine and clarify purposes, to assess individual student progress toward achieving program objectives, and improve teaching. The evaluation process:
   a. should be utilized for diagnostic/prescriptive teaching;
   b. is essential in the guidance of children toward the attainment of acceptable goals and in motivation of children and teachers to effect needed improvement;
   c. provides the basis for assessing the behavioral response of the learner in relation to the planned learning experiences and the development of learning experiences to follow;
   d. should be utilized as one means of describing the program to parents and the community in order to provide for a better understanding of educational values and outcomes;



2. A variety of evaluative techniques should be used for determining individual differences and needs of elementary school children. Such techniques should include the use of class discussion, knowledge testing, anecdotal records, and assessment of motor skill development and health-related fitness as well as teacher observation of attitudes and feelings. In schools where grading is mandated, these techniques should be taken into consideration.
3. It is more important to observe records of each child's progress than to consider the child's rank in relation to other children and/or national norms;
4. Provision should be made for periodic evaluation of the total physical education program by teachers, administrators, parents, and other qualified individuals. Particular attention should be given to the philosophy, instructional program, facilities, equipment, administrative support, and allocation of school resources.



We Believe That:

1. Pupils in elementary school should participate in an instructional program of physical education for a minimum of 150 minutes per week in addition to time allotted for free and/or supervised play. The following considerations should be made in scheduling physical education instruction:
   a. to best serve the growth, development, and activity needs of children, a daily program is necessary;
   b. the length of the class period must be appropriate to the needs and maturation of the learner, with 30 minutes as a suggested minimum;
   c. the time allocated for instruction should be exclusive of time used for dressing, showering, recess, free and/or supervised play periods, and noon-hour activities;
2. Groupings for instruction in physical education should reflect the intent of Title IX regulations;
3. The physical education program should reflect the intent of Public Law 94-142 and Section 504 of Public Law 93-112;
4. The physical education class size should be consistent with those of other subject areas and/or self-contained classes. Class groupings must be flexible enough to provide for differences in interests, levels of maturity, size, abilities, and needs;
5. Consideration of the teaching load is crucial to effective, high quality teaching. Personnel responsible for scheduling must consider the following factors:
   a. the physical education teacher needs time to plan as well as to teach the program, to coordinate the total

program, to consult with teachers, principals, resource teachers, and parents, and to work with children needing additional help;

b. teachers who travel between schools during the day should be given adequate time for travel and preparation to ensure that they can function effectively as members of the teaching teams in the schools to which they are assigned;

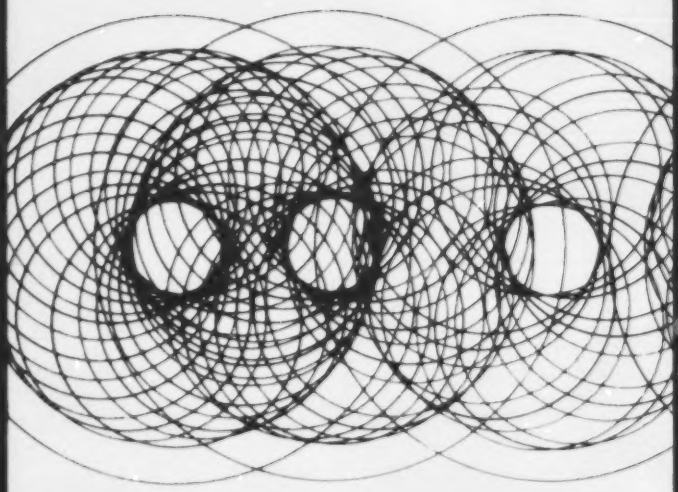
c. the number of preparations, length of class periods, number of children with whom the teacher will come in contact per day/per week, total number of classes, and the number of hours in the school day should be the criteria for determining teaching load. It is recommended that the physical education teacher's class load not exceed the equivalent of nine 30-minute periods a day. It is highly desirable to reserve at least five minutes between classes to enable the teacher to talk to individual students, make teaching notes, change equipment, confer with the classroom teacher, and to adjust from the group leaving to the group arriving. Consideration should be given to scheduling primary and intermediate classes in teaching blocks for better utilization of instructional time and organization of equipment;

6. Students and teachers should be appropriately dressed for the types of activities being conducted. Concern for freedom and quality of movement, and safety, should influence the type of attire worn.

EQUIPMENT AND FACILITIES

We Believe That:

1. Boards of education, through their regular school budget, should provide:
   a. funds for the purchase and maintenance of physical education supplies and equipment;
   b. physical education facilities for school and community use;
2. Standards for the purchase of supplies and equipment should be developed jointly by the physical education teachers and the school administrators;
3. If children are to be physically active and fully involved in the learning situation, ample equipment and supplies that vary in size, texture, etc. for each child are as essential as pencils and books. One ball, one rope, etc. per child is necessary for maximum learning to take place;
4. Sufficient indoor and outdoor facilities, and equipment should be provided in each elementary school and should be assigned primarily for physical education activities. Apparatus should be selected or designed for its developmental and educational value. It is equally important to provide adequate space for proper and safe storage of equipment.
5. School and community facilities and programs should be planned and used to supplement one another in serving children's needs;



6. "All-weather surfaces" should be provided and a portion properly marked with circles, lines, courts, etc. to permit participation in a wide variety of activities appropriate for various age levels;
7. Natural play areas should be retained/designed to permit creative and exploratory types of play. Grassy and hilly areas are as important as all-weather surfaces;
8. Plans for new physical education facilities are the responsibility of the community as well as the school, and should be developed in cooperation with physical education teachers, principals, and other resource persons.

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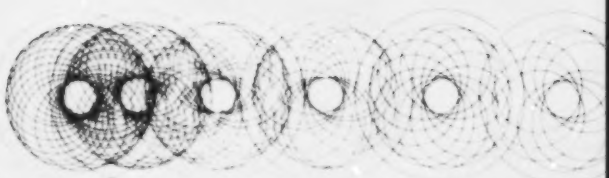
SCHOOL-RELATED PROGRAMS

We Believe That:

1. The physical activity needs of elementary school age children can best be served through a program of instruction in physical education supplemented by other opportunities for participation provided by school, home, and community;
2. Enrichment programs should provide opportunities for further development of knowledge and skills gained in the instructional physical education program during such periods as recess, noon hour, and extended school-day programs. The program should be varied in content and organization to provide for all levels of skill;
3. Intramural programs for continued participation in games, recreational sports, dance, gymnastics, and other activities should be offered to all children. This program usually starts in the intermediate grades as the children's desire for participation and group identification begins to emerge;
4. Competition at the elementary school level is a vital and forceful educational tool. It can stimulate a keen desire for self-improvement and create environments in which children, motivated by common purpose, unite in an effort to accomplish goals. However, to be beneficial competition must be success-oriented for all children and relevant to the school program. Carefully structured competitive experiences within the school, involving individual and group opportunities and conducted to achieve specific instructional objectives, are usually more congruent with elementary education goals than are inter-school competitive programs. Consideration of inter-school competitive programs should follow only after a sound physical education program has been provided for all the children in the elementary school, including an intramural program for the upper elementary grades.



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